



## Michigan Outcomes



# Access to Recreation – Michigan Grantees

Outcomes reported by Michigan grantees thus far include the following:

## **Increased support and participation from local units of government**

- The Grand Traverse Regional CF, which is pursuing improvements at Hull Park, has reported that the City of Traverse City has offered to help the trails organization with its engineering drawings for its connector trail design and has established management agreements with its Children's Garden and Traverse Area Community Sailing facility.
- The Monroe County CF reports that the City of Monroe has decided to widen an entire walkway in Veteran's Park, the site of the CF's Initiative-funded sensory garden. The City's effort goes beyond the agreement originally developed between the City and the CF.
- In Greenville, the Director of Recreation has decided to order only accessible porta-johns for City facilities.
- Van Buren Township has made a commitment to buy only accessible picnic tables, grills, and fire pits in the future.
- The CF of Southeast Michigan reports that in the City of Wayne (one of the CF's regrantees), a very high level of community engagement has been achieved, with the community also making plans to redesign and rebuild all of its other parks.
- The CF also reports that in the City of Detroit, where another regrant will shortly be announced, the City has changed its policy to state that it will redesign parks and other recreational facilities to be consistent with universal design principles as opportunity and finances permit.
- In Wyoming, where a WKKF Able to Play grant allowed for construction of a Boundless Playground and where a subsequent Access to Recreation grant allowed for construction of a splash pad, the grantee reports that the community updated its recreation master plan to explicitly acknowledge the desirability of universal design, and has adopted the practice of accessibility review for all construction projects. In addition, the Mayor's office is working to establish a citizen's committee to advocate for people with disabilities.



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## **Innovation in adaptive product design**

Some of the grantees' work involves experimental materials, equipment, or technologies. Their innovations, if successful, may prove beneficial to parks and recreation departments throughout the country. These innovations include:

- St. Clair and Lapeer's collaborative work on canoe and kayak launches that will allow independent use.
- Michigan Technological University and its engineering students' work on a wayfaring system that will allow independent cross-country skiing and hiking by people with visual disabilities. Michigan Tech is also working on an extreme sport wheelchair that will allow "off-road" access.
- Portage's use of a less-costly carpet playground surface that will serve as a national test site to measure long-term durability. If successful, the surface will provide a lower-cost option for communities as they replace/rebuild outdated playgrounds.
- The Michigan Department of Natural Resources' development of a new design for toilet/shower facilities at State Parks. The new design will be unisex, employing universal design principles. The revised design makes sense for park operations as well as for accessibility reasons, as it will require only one stall to be closed at a time as opposed to entire men's or women's facilities.



# Department of Natural Resources

The most significant changes in policy and practice to date have occurred within the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. The following achievements are noted:

## **Formation of a DNR Department Accessibility Team and Accessibility Advisory Council**

The Department has created an Accessibility Team (A-Team) with representation from across the organization's divisions and with membership from other state agencies. The A-Team has helped the Department develop a single strategy for accessibility guidelines whereas, in the past, several divisions were working separately to define accessibility standards.

Rebecca Humphries, Department Director, appointed a 19-member Accessibility Advisory Council (AAC) from the private and public sectors to make recommendations to the Department for improving access to recreation.

## **Policy Recommendations**

### **• Personal Assistive Mobility Devices**

For more than a year, the A-Team and AAC have realized that a central problem is that while technology has improved the mobility of people with disabilities, outdated laws govern vehicular use. The teams put together a recommendation to recognize personal assistive mobility devices as an extension of the person who uses them and not a vehicle to be regulated.

### **• Assisted Hunt**

The teams recommended the creation of an assisted hunt license that will allow an individual who has a disability and cannot pass the hunters safety course, even with accommodations, to continue to hunt with direct, individual support from an adult licensed hunter.

### **• Crossbow Permit Expansion**

Several members of the teams worked with the Natural Resources Commission to improve the requirements to qualify to use a crossbow due to a disability.

## **Training and Education**

### **• Demonstration Day**

The teams hosted a first-ever Demonstration Day to educate and promote the advancements in adaptive equipment. More than 100 DNR staff members and policymakers attended the event, where they were able to try out adaptive shooting equipment, archery equipment, and adaptive scooters and carts. DNR Director Humphries described the event as "landmark" and "eye-opening."

### **• DNR Staff Training**

The Department has created training sessions for Meetings and Events and for Built Facilities. The training focuses on making meetings, events, and facilities more accessible for people with disabilities. Department personnel are required to attend both training programs. To date, more than 400 Department personnel have been trained.

The Department has hosted communication training to learn respectful terms for speaking and writing about people with disabilities. This training is being incorporated into the DNR Internet and Intranet sites.

# Department of Natural Resources

## Grant Review Process

- **Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Grants**

The Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNTRF) provides grants annually to Michigan local units of government and state departments that provide public outdoor recreation. A scoring system was institutionalized that awards additional points for proposals that incorporate the Principles of Universal Design in both the planning process and project design.

Information on the new scoring system was added to two existing documents that are the primary resources for grant applicants: the 2007 Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Guidelines Booklet and the Application Form. Both of these have been distributed at various workshops and made available via the DNR Web site to all potential applicants.

All new information related to the Access to Recreation Initiative was prominently identified using the international symbol of accessibility to draw applicants' attention to the new requests related to potential development projects. An overview of the Initiative is the primary focus under the "New Information for 2007" category of the Guidelines Booklet. Additionally, MNRTF grant applications are reviewed in a two-step process that provides applicants with direct feedback on their proposals and an opportunity to revise and resubmit.



# Michigan Advisory Council

The Advisory Council is planning a seminar on inclusion and accessible recreation in partnership with the Michigan Recreation and Park Association Foundation. The seminar will be held February 3, 2009, in Dearborn, the day before the start of the MRPA annual conference.

Invitations to the free seminar will be sent to foundations, disability organizations, and government agencies.

## Proposed Agenda

Sarah Panken, Active Communities Coordinator, Michigan Fitness Foundation: *An overview of the Active, Healthy Communities Initiative and the importance of encouraging greater physical activity. Session also will provide an overview of the PAC community self-assessment and the benefits of completing the assessment.*

A representative from the Centers for Independent Living: Recreation and Issues Relating to Disability. *An orientation to a) the importance of opportunities for physical activity for persons with disabilities and b) overcoming preliminary barriers to engaging people with disabilities in the community, including familiarity with people-first language and identifying community based organizations that focus on disability-related issues.*

Ray Bloomer and Jennifer Skulski, National Center on Accessibility, Indiana University: *Universal Design Overview. An introductory discussion on the Principles of Universal Design, how the UD perspective differs from an ADA perspective, and how the Principles of Universal Design can be applied in the recreational setting.*

Linda Hegstrom, Grants Manager, Michigan Department of Natural Resources: *New MDNR Policies Relating to Accessibility. A review of a) updated MNRTF grant guidelines awarding points for accessibility, and b) updated requirements for parks and recreation master plans.*

TBD: Community Case Study. *How parks and recreation agencies can take advantage of opportunities to partner with their local community foundations.*

